

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended): A communications method for transferring electronic data between users of a communications system, the method comprising:
delivering an e-mail message from a sender to at least one recipient; and
upon opening of the e-mail message by the recipient, indicating to the at least one recipient an online state of one or more of the sender and any one other recipient of the e-mail message,

wherein indicating the online state comprises:

determining an identity of one or more of the sender or any one other recipient by stripping a domain name from an email address associated with the one or more of the sender or any one other recipient, and

determining the online state of the one or more of the sender or any one other recipient by performing a reverse look-up with the determined identity of the one or more of the sender or any one other recipient.

2. (Original): The method of claim 1 further comprising sending a message to at least one of the sender and any other recipient based on the online state.

3. (Original): The method of claim 2 wherein the message comprises an instant message.

4. (Original): The method of claim 2 wherein the message comprises an e-mail message.

5. (Original): The method of claim 4 wherein the e-mail message comprises an invitation to join the communications system.

6. (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein indicating the online state comprises displaying a graphical user interface to the recipient.

7. (Original): The method of claim 6 wherein the graphical user interface comprises an icon positioned next to an e-mail address in the e-mail message.

8. (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein indicating the online state comprises indicating whether the sender is online, offline, or not a member of the communications system.

9. (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein indicating the online state comprises accepting a request to check user online state.

10. (Original): The method of claim 9 wherein the request comprises at least one e-mail address.

11. (Original): The method of claim 9 wherein the request comprises an Internet protocol.

12. (Original): The method of claim 11 wherein the Internet protocol is hypertext transfer protocol.

13. (Original): The method of claim 9 wherein the request is initiated by a client of the user.

14. (Original): The method of claim 9 further comprising sending a redirection command based on the online state.

15. (Original): The method of claim 14 wherein the redirection command comprises a uniform resource locator.

16. (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein indicating the online state comprises establishing a persistent connection to an instant messaging server.

17. (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein indicating the online state comprises checking a control port.

18. (Currently Amended): A computer program for transferring electronic data between users of a communications system, the computer program being stored on a computer readable medium and comprising instructions for:

delivering an e-mail message from a sender to at least one recipient;

upon opening of the e-mail message by the recipient, indicating to the at least one recipient an online state of at least one of the sender and any one other recipient of the e-mail message,

wherein indicating the online state comprises:

determining an identity of one or more of the sender or any one other recipient by stripping a domain name from an email address associated with the one or more of the sender or any one other recipient, and

determining the online state of the one or more of the sender or any one other recipient by performing a reverse look-up with the determined identity of the one or more of the sender or any one other recipient.

19. (Original): The computer program of claim 18 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a disc.

20. (Original): The computer program of claim 18 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a client device.

21. (Original): The computer program of claim 18 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a host device.

22. (Original): The computer program of claim 18 wherein the computer readable (medium comprises a propagated signal.

23. (Currently Amended): A communications apparatus for transferring electronic data between users of a communications system, the apparatus configured to:

deliver an e-mail message from a sender to at least one recipient;

upon opening of the e-mail message by the recipient, indicate to the at least one recipient an online state of at least one of the sender and any one other recipient of the e-mail message,

wherein to indicate the online state comprises:

determine an identity of one or more of the sender or any one other recipient by stripping a domain name from an email address associated with the one or more of the sender or any one other recipient, and

determine the online state of the one or more of the sender or any one other recipient by performing a reverse look-up with the determined identity of the one or more of the sender or any one other recipient.

24. (Original): The communications apparatus of claim 23 wherein the communications apparatus comprises a client device.

25. (Original): The communications apparatus of claim 23 wherein the communications apparatus comprises a host device.

26. (Currently Amended): A communications apparatus for transferring electronic data between users of a communications system, the apparatus comprising:
delivering means for delivering an e-mail message from a sender to at least one recipient; and

indicating means for indicating to the at least one recipient an online state of at least one of the sender and any one other recipient of the e-mail message upon opening of the e-mail message by the recipient,

wherein the indicating means comprises:

means for determining an identity of one or more of the sender or any one other recipient by stripping a domain name from an email address associated with the one or more of the sender or any one other recipient, and

means for determining the online state of the one or more of the sender or any one other recipient by performing a reverse look-up with the determined identity of the one or more of the sender or any one other recipient.

27. (Previously Presented): The method of claim 1 further comprising enabling a graphical user interface based upon the online state.

28. (Previously Presented): The method of claim 27 wherein a graphical user interface enabled for a first online state differs from a graphical user interface enabled for a second online state.

29. (Previously Presented): The computer program of claim 18 further comprising instructions for enabling a graphical user interface based upon the online state.

30. (Previously Presented): The computer program of claim 29 wherein instructions for enabling a graphical user interface for a first online state differ from instructions for enabling a graphical user interface for a second online state.

31. (Previously Presented): The method of claim 1 wherein indicating the online state comprises indicating the online state of the sender of the e-mail message.

32. (Previously Presented): The method of claim 1 wherein indicating the online state comprises indicating the online state of at least one other recipient of the e-mail message.

33. (Previously Presented): The method of claim 1 wherein indicating the online state comprises indicating the online state of both the sender and at least one other recipient of the e-mail message.

34. (Previously Presented): The method of claim 1 wherein indicating the online state comprises indicating the online state of the sender and every other recipient of the e-mail message.

35. (Previously Presented): The method of claim 1 wherein indicating the online state comprises indicating whether one or more of the sender and any other recipient is online, offline, away, busy, or not a member of the communications system.

36. (Previously Presented): The method of claim 1 wherein indicating the online state comprises providing one or more visual indicators to the recipient.

37. (Previously Presented): The method of claim 36 wherein the visual indicators are associated with one or more of the sender and at least one other recipient.

38. (Previously Presented): The method of claim 36 wherein characteristics of the visual indicators are used to indicate the online state of one or more of the sender and at least one other recipient.

39. (Previously Presented): The method of claim 36 further comprising selecting at least one of the visual indicators to initiate at least one user interface.

40. (Previously Presented): The method of claim 39 wherein selecting the at least one visual indicator initiates at least one user interface configured to enable the

recipient to send an e-mail message communication to an identity associated with the visual indicator.

41. (Previously Presented): The method of claim 39 wherein selecting the at least one visual indicator initiates at least one user interface configured to enable the recipient to send an instant message communication to an identity associated with the visual indicator.

42. (Previously Presented): The computer program of claim 18 wherein the instructions for indicating the online state comprise instructions for indicating the online state of the sender of the e-mail message.

43. (Previously Presented): The computer program of claim 18 wherein the instructions for indicating the online state comprise instructions for indicating the online state of at least one other recipient of the e-mail message.

44. (Previously Presented): The computer program of claim 18 wherein the instructions for indicating the online state comprise instructions for indicating the online state of both the sender and at least one other recipient of the e-mail message.

45. (Previously Presented): The computer program of claim 18 wherein the instructions for indicating the online state comprise instructions for indicating the online state of the sender and every other recipient of the e-mail message.

46. (Previously Presented): The computer program of claim 18 wherein the instructions for indicating the online state comprise instructions for providing one or more visual indicators to the recipient.

47. (Previously Presented): The communications apparatus of claim 23 wherein the apparatus is configured to indicate the online state of the sender of the e-mail message.

48. (Previously Presented): The communications apparatus of claim 23 wherein the apparatus is configured to indicate the online state of at least one other recipient of the e-mail message.

49. (Previously Presented): The communications apparatus of claim 23 wherein the apparatus is configured to indicate the online state of both the sender and at least one other recipient of the e-mail message.

50. (Previously Presented): The communications apparatus of claim 23 wherein the apparatus is configured to indicate the online state of the sender and every other recipient of the e-mail message.

51. (Previously Presented): The communications apparatus of claim 23 wherein the apparatus is configured to indicate the online state by providing one or more visual indicators to the recipient.

52. (Previously Presented): The communications apparatus of claim 26 wherein the indicating means comprises indicating means for indicating the online state of the sender of the e-mail message.

53. (Previously Presented): The communications apparatus of claim 26 wherein the indicating means comprises indicating means for indicating the online state of at least one other recipient of the e-mail message.

54. (Previously Presented): The communications apparatus of claim 26 wherein the indicating means comprises indicating means for indicating the online state of both the sender and at least one other recipient of the e-mail message.

55. (Previously Presented): The communications apparatus of claim 26 wherein the indicating means comprises indicating means for indicating the online state of the sender and every other recipient of the e-mail message.

56. (Previously Presented): The communications apparatus of claim 26 wherein the indicating means comprises indicating means for providing one or more visual indicators to the recipient.

Claims 57-80. (Cancelled).